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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews guidelines of the Cooperative Extension Service, as set forth in Smith-Lever Act of 1924. It discusses the early educational program, examines the efforts of the present program, pointing out weaknesses and methodology, and sets forth objectives for future program efforts. (NF)

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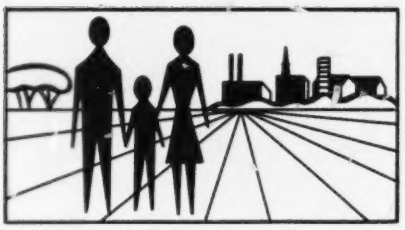

OUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR BALANCED PROGRAMMING

Revision

of

THE RESPONSIBILITY WE HAVE

by

Edwin L. Kirby, Administrator
Extension Service
USDA

Presentation at ES Staff Conference and Regional Directors Conferences, March and April 1970.

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The Cooperative Extension Service grew out of a need --a need to help the disadvantaged--those deprived farm families who did not have the economic, social, political, and educational advantages that their city cousins were enjoying. Characteristics of rural America at that time were these: Low incomes, inferior educational opportunities, poor health facilities and services, lack of opportunity to use their capabilities, ignorance of available research and knowledge which could help them to achieve better lives, insights into "what could be" in order to raise their aspirations and desire to improve.

In 1914, when the Smith-Lever Act was passed creating the Extension Service, the report of the House Committee on Agriculture includes these guidelines:

> "The theory of this bill is to extend this system... to the entire country by providing for at least one trained demonstrator or itinerant teacher for each agricultural county, who in the very nature of things must give leadership and direction along all lines of rural activity - social, economic, and financial....
>
> ".... He is to assume leadership in every movement, whatever it may be, the aim of which is better farming, better living, more happiness, more education, and better citizenship."

This responsibility of the Extension Service is just as true today as it was in 1914. The Cooperative Extension Service was created on the assumption that whatever people do they can do better through education. Through education, they can produce better products, build better communities, achieve a richer quality of life, and attain greater satisfaction in doing so.

Extension was also created on the assumption that much intelligence was to be found in the "masses" and through an informal educational system, opportunities could be provided which would find and release this intelligence. Education, which is learning for life, must involve the basic institutions--the family, the community, the school, and the church. Since most people cannot come to school, school must go out to them.

For those of you who are students of early Extension history, you will recognize that the early pioneer Extension agent was a remarkable person. He was working with a suspicious audience--the farmer and the farm family who wanted little to do with the "man from the college," "new-fangled ideas," "book learning."

They had their own sense of values, their myths, their traditions. It wasn't until the agent knocked on doors, showed them by demonstration--that what he had to offer would work--then he began to gain their confidence. Those agents who were sensitive to people's needs, who were able to understand and see things through the eyes of the farmer and his family, succeeded. Those who were not sensitive, failed.

The successful agent was one who could -

HELP PEOPLE TO KNOW WHAT THERE IS TO WANT

and

CAUSE PEOPLE TO WANT WHAT HE HAS TO OFFER

This was and still is the essence of a successful Extension educational program. As those "deprived

segments" of our early 1900-1920 society began to have confidence in Extension, they began to request assistance and demand help. They began to tell Extension what they wanted and they desired to be involved in determining what the agent taught.

The demand for assistance became so great, with always limited professional resources, that individual contacts by the agent to the most needy were more difficult and group sessions and mass media methods were developed for those who were most persistent in their demands.

As a result of these developments, there seems to be a tendency today for "those who have, get" and "those who do not have, continue to be deprived."

Many will and do say that Extension works with the middle class and ignores those who need it most. Although more than one-third of our time is spent with low-income people, the representatives of the poor people are very vociferous and adamant about this and express their feeling openly, strongly, and often.

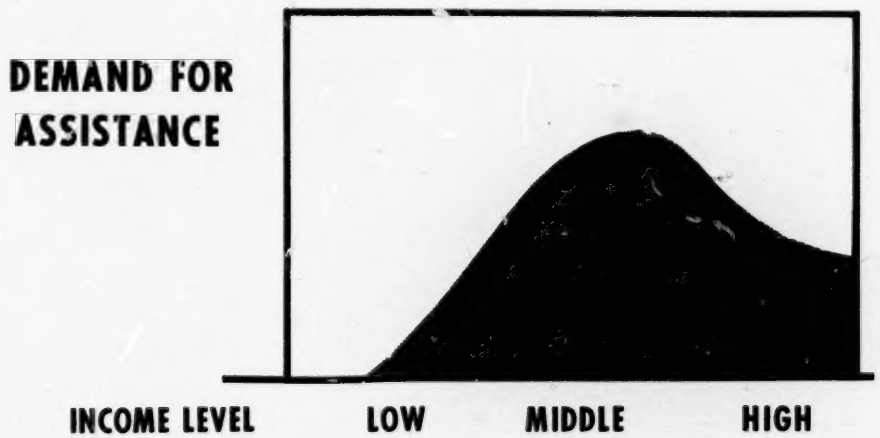
It seems to me that we need to consider what I choose to call <u>program balance</u>, or a need to work with and assist all segments of society in those areas for which we have competence, should provide assistance, and have the legal and moral obligation to help.

Are our programs in balance? Do we serve only those who demand our services? Should we serve only those who have the greatest degree of need? Or, as a publicly-supported educational agency or institution, do we have a responsibility to insure a balance in our program efforts?

Let me illustrate. If we look at the degree of need to improve incomes in relation to the degree of educational assistance needed, it would look like this:

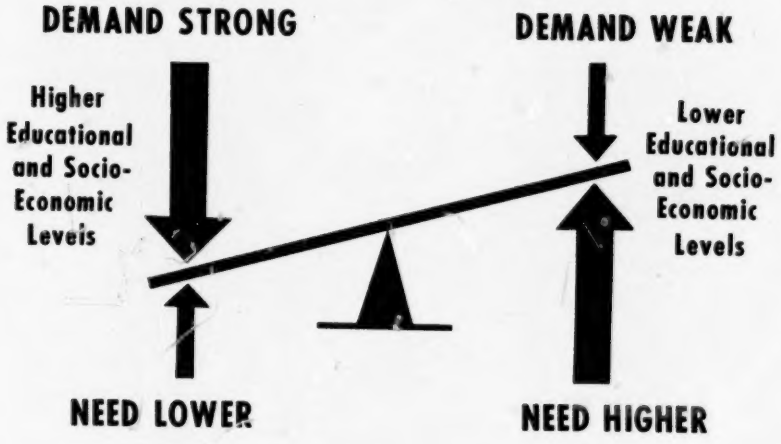
DEGREE OF ASSISTANCE NEEDED

If we look at the demand for assistance to improve levels of income in relation to educational assistance, it would look something like this:



Or, we can illustrate this lack of balance by using other factors as shown here:

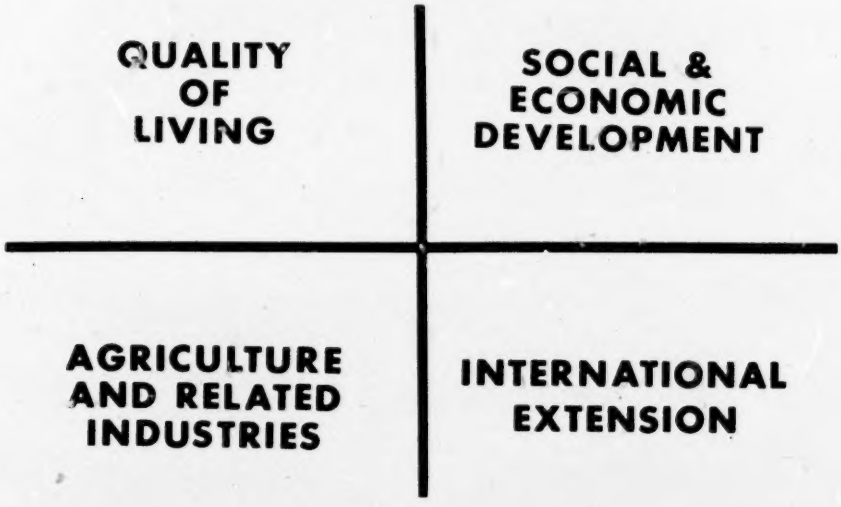
PROGRAM OUT OF BALANCE



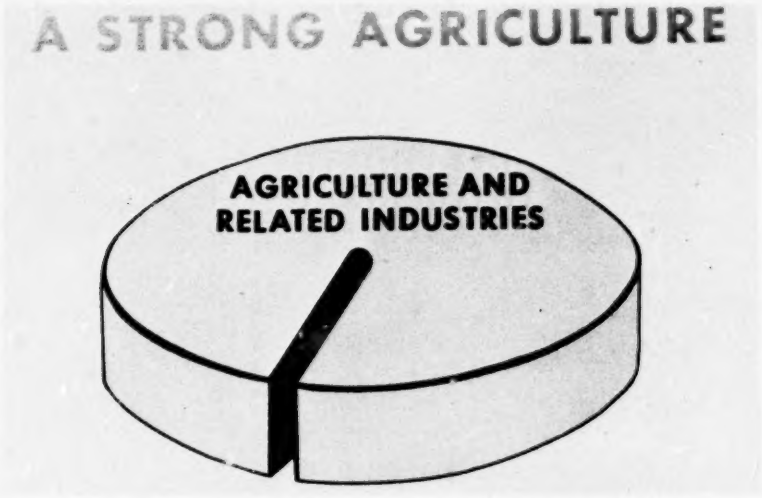
The Joint USDA-NASULGC Committee report, A People and a Spirit, specifies four major areas of need --

- Quality of living
- Social & Economic Development
- Agriculture and Related Industries
- International Extension

MAJOR AREAS OF NEED

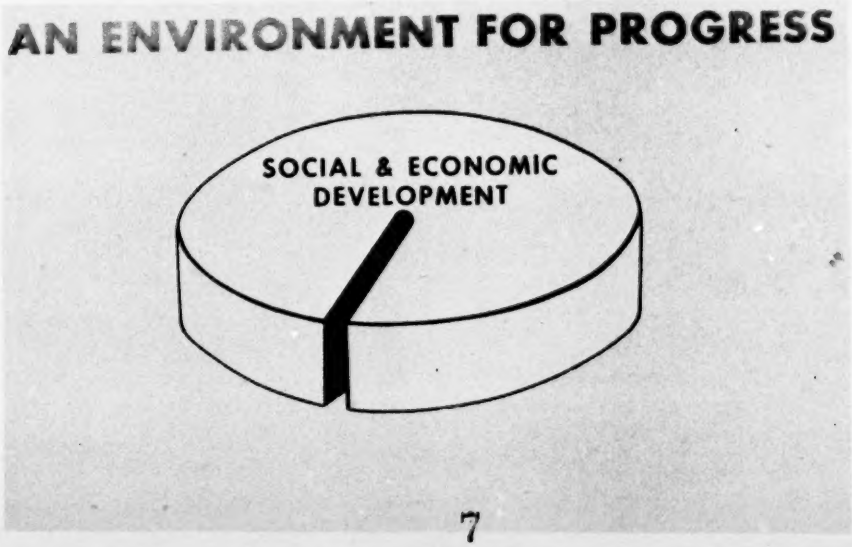


The report indicated that a strong agriculture is basic to our Nation's economy. Consumers more than ever are dependent on efficient, profitable food and fiber production--and they are the primary beneficiaries of an efficient agricultural industry.



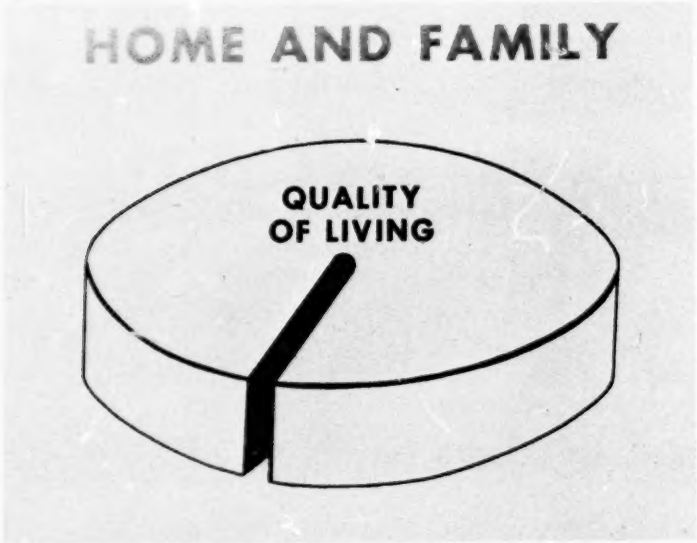
The report also revealed that an environment for progress is essential as continued massive migration from rural to urban areas is continually depleting our rural communities. Many of these communities can no longer provide adequate schools, jobs, housing, health, and other necessities.

Associated with this situation are problems of crime, pollution, unemployment, welfare, and community planning. These problems are a major challenge to the Cooperative Extension Service.



A look at the Home and Family situation revealed basic practical educational needs of disadvantaged, minority, racial, ethnic, alienated, and dislocated individuals and families. Business and agricultural technology has so increased the rate of economic progress that those not in the mainstream fall further and further behind.

The Cooperative Extension Service, of necessity, must adjust and expand programs to help low-income persons, the disadvantaged, minority, racial, and alienated clientele move into the mainstream where they have opportunities to contribute and benefit on a basis of equality.



Major accent is on reaching out and helping disadvantaged, minority, racial, ethnic, and alienated people who have not demanded or even requested our educational assistance.

The major objective is to help bring these individuals and groups into the mainstream of our program effort, while continuing help to other clientele with which Extension has worked.

When we put together those problems and needs that challenge Cooperative Extension--agriculture and related industries; social and economic development; quality of living; quality of the environment; and our international assistance and commitment--we find that the pressing needs of people far outweigh the current capabilities of the Cooperative Extension Service.

Certainly we are making progress toward meeting some of the needs and problems through better use of our present resources. But we have not done enough. We must make greater progress in program and staff development, in developing and improving new methodologies and strategies and in expanding and redirecting staff efforts for each of our major program areas. The objective is to bring Cooperative Extension programs in balance with the needs of people from all segments of society.

What is the proper balance?

Who determines where we put priorities?

Do we continue to serve mainly those who demand our services; or do we serve more of those who are deprived, alienated, and "out of the mainstream"?

One policy is crystal clear to me. As an educational institution and as public employees paid from taxpayers' money, we have an obligation to serve all segments of society within the framework of our responsibilities; and all segments of society must be represented in determining what is the appropriate balance in our educational assistance.

The primary function of the Cooperative Extension Service is education in which the professional staff and the people are the major participants in planning, implementing, and evaluating educational programs.

Thus, effective participation in program development is a learning experience which results in changes in values, basic beliefs, attitudes, and living patterns of people--clientele and staff.

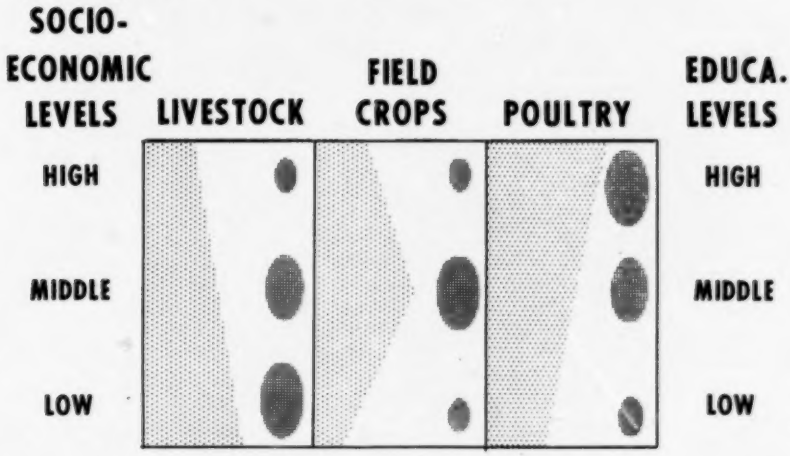
A unique feature of Cooperative Extension is that it produces a mutual interest and common concern among the people and the staff who are receptive to joint effort in identifying and solving problems. The degree to which we have representative people involved in this process will help to determine the nature of balance in our programs.

We cannot be all things to all people. With limited resources and staff, we must of necessity limit the scope of our program assistance. But such limitations cannot and must not be by race, color, creed, or national origin.

In considering program balance, we may need to limit our program efforts within program categories, rather than by socio-economic levels, levels of educational attainment, or by origin of birth or creed, or race, or color.

Let me illustrate by showing only one of our major program categories. This would apply to home economics, 4-H, and rural development as well.

BALANCE IN AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS



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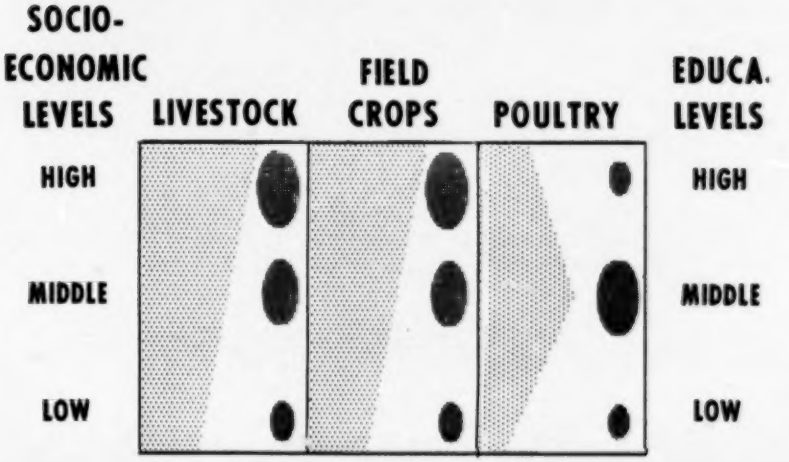

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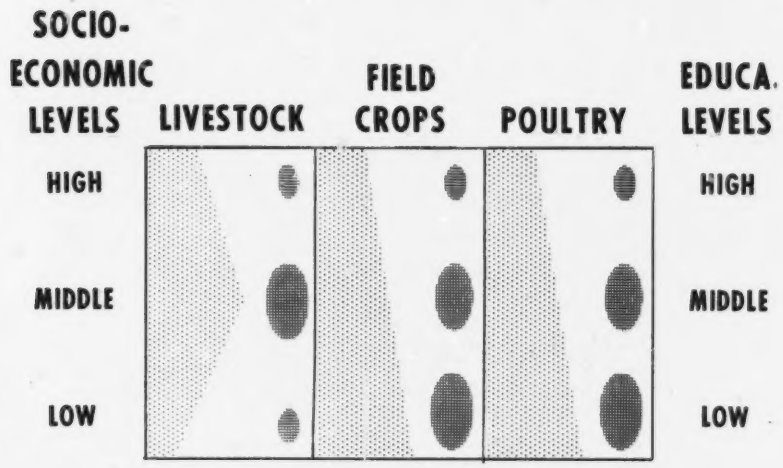

For example, considering all the needs of livestock producers, we may have to restrict the program assistance to those problem areas needing the most emphasis. We need to consider designing programs for the low income- and small farmers, as well as the highly commercial, more highly educated and affluent producers.

We may need to plan with people separate programs for the high socio-economic and highly educated producers of field crops different from those producers who are small operators with limited capital and who are at lower educational levels. The nature and sophistication of assistance needed is quite different. Please note that I did not say separate programs by race, color, creed, or national origin.

The leader representatives from each group may need to be brought together separately to properly plan adequate programs designed to meet their respective needs.

The professional staff member may have to play a stronger role in determining program priorities, depending on the

degree of difference in the various levels of potential clientele. In any event, representatives of different interest groups from the various levels must participate jointly with the agent in determining priorities.

Now, with this background and statement of direction and emphasis as I see it, let me get to the real issues and hit at the heart of the problem. At the root of our crisis of program balance, in rural and urban areas alike, is weakness in program development and methodology. We cling to the belief that it is possible to meet today's needs and problems with strategies and methodologies of the past. We tend to deal in the past, while individuals, families, groups, and communities wrestle with the problems of a new day and a new era in human development.

You have all heard of the old adage: "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink."

Let me illustrate:

but

"You can put salt in his feed, make him thirsty, so he will want to drink."

This is the essence of Extension education. "Help people to know what there is to want, and to want what we have to offer."

This is what I intend to do for the next few minutes. I hope that you will become sufficiently "thirsty" that you will want to lend all possible assistance in solving the critical issues which face all of us.

Let's look at the problem.

The Cooperative Extension Service has experienced continuing criticism and received pointed questions from the general public; the disadvantaged, alienated, racial, and ethnic groups; and from some of our traditional clientele concerning its ability to provide equal access and opportunity for all people to participate in its programs.

One of the major problems stems from the basic assumption that mass prejudice really exists in the total American society and that people have value orientations and basic beliefs which influence their attitude and behavior patterns.

At the heart of the problem is the lack of understanding by all of us as to the nature and meaning of prejudice; the needs, problems, and desires of people of the various subcultures and their own attitudes and patterns of behavior as they interact with people of different racial, educational, and socio-economic groups. There is a growing consciousness of the need to explore the nature of all inter-cultural relations and devise ways of eliminating social and economic barriers and inhibitions which limit or prevent effective participation. The progress of technology continues to by-pass the really poor; and even today, human dislocation remains extensive in the American society.

Basic objectives for us:

The basic objectives of this effort are:

1. Analyze conditions and identify problems, inhibitions, and social and economic barriers which tend to limit participation of people.

2. Identify the abilities that need to be improved or developed, attitudes that need to be changed, methodology that needs to be employed to increase participation of people from different cultural, educational, racial, and socio-economic groups.

3. Identify and understand the meaning of prejudices of people in the various subcultures in the American society, and the need to involve them in program development.

Specific objectives will vary from State to State and within States. Therefore, each State, district, area, and local group will need to identify its problems and decide on priorities and specific objectives.

Rationale and Justification

These questions need to be raised and every effort made to find solutions:

(1) What is the actual situation of the total Cooperative Extension Service at the national, State, district, area, and local levels?

(2) How well does it fit the needs, problems, and desires of people?

(3) What are the gaps, voids, omissions; and why do they exist?

(4) What difference do these make in quality and quantity of service extended to the unserved and the poorly served?

(5) What future plans are outlined to approach the revolutionary changes--social, economic, technological?

(6) What is Extension's role in the massive problems created by the complexity of change?

(7) To what extent are our programs out of balance?

These are basic questions for Cooperative Extension to ask itself and they must be answered satisfactorily. No Cooperative Extension program can be vital and definitive if the base from which it operates is poorly developed and held in question by those for whom the program should serve.

There is much evidence--"A People and a Spirit," "The People Left Behind," OIG audits, and other reports and studies--which reflect the urgency for program balance and program participation, as well as programs which are relevant to problems and needs of the disadvantaged, alienated, racial and ethnic group members as they themselves perceive them.

The overt violence of the 1960's and the current demands of racial, ethnic, and alienated groups for equal opportunities in the American society clearly show deep-seated prejudice and alienation, long unremedied, and the struggle for renewal on every front, Cooperative Extension included. The full impact of the revolution of the 1960's on the American society in general, and CES in particular, has yet to be felt.

To approach the major problem facing Extension through the educational program development process is a positive approach and is relevant. It is relevant because it is

based on the assumption that it is better to prevent social and economic problems than simply to alleviate them. It recognizes the fact that what one clientele group enjoys cannot be separated from what another clientele group suffers. It also recognizes the fact that it is <u>through education</u>, <u>not coercion</u>, that enduring change is achieved.

The policy of the Extension Service is to support the missions of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and land-grant universities. This function will be conducted in ways which enhance equal access and opportunity for participation in Extension programs by disadvantaged, alienated, racial and ethnic group members. The Extension Service is committed to this effort.

Major benefits from strengthening the program development process for greater participation would fulfill our mission as a delivery system that is relevant to needs and problems of people of a given location. The benefits would result in:

1. Improved staff understanding, sensitivity, and appreciation of differences in people and the need to involve them in total program development.

2. Improved communications, working relationships, and social relations between staff and clientele, thus increasing morale.

3. Improved individual, group, and community development.

4. Improved public image of the Cooperative Extension Service.

A lack of systematic program development without effective participation of the various segments of the population can have direct reverse consequences. The increasing socio-economic complexity, the rapidity of change, and the elusiveness of problems maximize the desperate need for program balance, for renewed emphasis, and for methodologies and strategies appropriate for reaching program goals. Without this, there cannot be the focusing of public support for Extension vital to success.

What we have learned from Cooperative Extension during the last fifty-five years may not show us exactly how to solve the problem; what it does show us is that it can be done.

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